

REMARKS

Claims **1-9, 11-18** were amended, claims **10** and **19-20** were canceled, and new claims **21-37** were added. Following the present amendment, claims **1-9, 11-18**, and **21-37** are pending in the present application. The requisite additional claims fee is enclosed.

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Applicants thank the Examiner for making the Office Action mailed 6/9/2003 non-final.

The Examiner's election/restriction and rejections are traversed below.

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Election/Restriction

The Office Action stated that "newly submitted claims 19 and 20 are directed to an invention that is independent or distinct from the invention originally claimed," since "in the instant case the product as claimed can be made by another and materially different process."

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Applicants respectfully submit that the Office Action has not established a prima facie case for restricting claims 21-22. Under MPEP 808.02, even if two inventions are shown to be distinct, the Examiner, in order to establish reasons for insisting upon restriction, must show by appropriate explanation one of the following: a separate classification, a separate status in the art when the inventions are classifiable together, or a different field of search. The Office

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Action has not provided an appropriate explanation for any of the three reasons listed above. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider the restriction requirement, and to consider newly-presented claims 21-22.

35 U.S.C. §112

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Claims **1-13** were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as indefinite. Claim **1** was amended to explicitly recite an assembly comprising a support structure, a column, and a carrier. Applicants submit that claims **1-13** satisfy the requirements of 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

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35 U.S.C. §102, 103

Claims **1-3, 5, 6, 8, 10-14** and **17** were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by Rounbehler et al. (US 5,808,178). Claims **7, 9, 15** and **16** were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Rounbehler et al. in view of Haas et al. (US 6,454,939), while claims **4** and **18** were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Rounbehler et al.

Claim 1 recites a carrier connected to the support structure along at least one ring of the support structure, the carrier extending generally along a plane of the at least one ring between opposite sides of the at least one ring. The side rails 120 described by Rounbehler et al. do not extend generally along the plane of the rings 125 in the assembly of Rounbehler et al. Furthermore, the side rails 120 extend between different rings, rather than between opposite sides of the same ring 125 of Rounbehler et al. In addition, it is not clear why a skilled artisan would be motivated to modify the Rounbehler et al. device to arrive at the subject matter of the instant claims, particularly since moving side rails 120 to extend along rings 125 would destroy the purpose of side rails 120 in the assembly of Rounbehler et al.

Claim 14 recites clips formed along a major surface of a handle. The grooves 130 of Rounbehler et al. are formed along a minor surface of each side rail 120. Moreover, Rounbehler et al. do not provide a suggestion or motivation for modifying their teaching to arrive at clips formed along a major surface of a handle, as claimed.

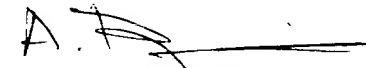
Applicants submit claims 2-9, 11-13, 15-18, and 21-22, and 31-34 to be patentable for the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1 or claim 14. Similarly, claims 23-30 recite the limitations discussed above with respect to claim 1, while claims 36-37 recite the limitations discussed above with respect to claim 14. Claims 23-30 and 36-37 are submitted to be patentable for the reasons set forth above.

Claim 35 recites a strip form handle for connecting to a winding structure on which a chromatographic column is mounted, the handle comprising a chromatographic column connector for fluidically coupling two chromatographic columns. The Office Action states that Rounbehler et al. teach "a part for mounting a column connector (200-fig 6-8; col. 4 lines 14-21) as in instant claim 6." The fitting 200 described by Rounbehler et al. is attached to a wall 205 (see column 4 lines 21-27 and Fig. 1), rather than to a side rail 120. It is not clear why a skilled artisan would have been motivated by the teachings of Rounbehler et al. to attempt to move the fitting 200 from the wall 205 to a side rail 120 of Rounbehler et al. Applicants submit claim 35 to be patentable in view of Rounbehler et al.

In light of the above. Applicants respectfully submit the instant claims to be patentable in view of the prior art of record, and request the Examiner to indicate the allowability of the instant claims in the next Office Action.

5 Respectfully submitted,

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